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2301.1 Foster Care Overview

A. Foster Care Per Diem – DFCS Foster Homes

1. Foster Care rates are set by the Legislature and approved by the Governor.
2. In addition to the approved foster care rate, the DFCS County Director/designee may approve a special per diem of \$.50 to \$1.75 that may be added to the current foster care rate for a child in Family Foster Care whose care demands additional time and skills of the foster parent. The special per diem should be documented in writing with justification for the higher per diem. The document should include the child's name, date of birth, additional amount approved and the beginning to ending effective dates (no more than 1 year).
3. Per diem for family foster care children whose rate includes the basic rate plus the special per diem should be charged to the regular family foster care program numbers 501, 502, 503, and 560.
4. Per diem is only paid to the foster home for the days that the child also spends the night (Head in the Bed Rule). See Social Services Fiscal Chapter 1016.30, SSMT 04-06.
 - Effective April 2005 for Family Foster Children
 - Effective March 2004 for Room Board and Watchful Oversight Children
 - Exceptions: Concurrent and Respite per diem is used to pay two foster parents for the same nights.

5. The following are the current Foster Care Per Diem Rates as of July 1, 2013:

Ages	Basic	Special	Total Applicable
Birth through age 5	\$15.04	Up to \$1.75	\$16.79
Age 6 through age 12	\$17.00	Up to \$1.75	\$18.75
Age 13 and over	\$19.36	Up to \$1.75	\$21.11
Entitlement Code	01	02	

The use of Entitlement Code 02 was effective service month March, 2004.

NOTE: Effective April 2009, any restricted fund cost associated with entitlement codes 01, 02, and 99 should be separated accordingly.

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Rates Effective July 1, 2007:

Birth through 5	\$14.60
Ages 6 through 12	\$16.50
Ages 13 and older	\$18.80

NOTE: If the child's per diem is over the total applicable per diem listed above and placed in a DFCS foster home, a State Approved Per Diem Waiver is required and the appropriate specialized family foster care UAS program code should be used.

NOTE: Foster care children 18 and over may sign themselves back into the custody of DFCS which will make them eligible for ILP services and the foster parents will continue to receive foster care benefits. For more information on this refer to the Independent Living Policy.

6. The child's per diem rate changes the month following the child's birthday even if their birthday is on the 1st day of the month.
7. If a child is removed from a foster care home pending a CPS investigation, the foster parents will not be paid per diem for the days the child is not in the home.
8. Effective July 1, 2006, Family Foster Parents who care for 3 or more sibling children in DFCS custody are entitled to a per child sibling supplement.

- Only one home per month may receive the sibling incentive and that would be the Primary Foster Home.
- The caseworker must enter all of the information into SHINES for the sibling children which will trigger the system to generate a sibling incentive payment on each of the children's invoices.
- Foster homes who are providing concurrent or respite care are not eligible for the sibling supplement. The supplement is intended for the Regular Foster Care Home.
- Children's restricted funds are not to be used to pay the cost of the sibling incentive supplement.
- If the number of sibling children drops below 3 for any reason, the foster home becomes ineligible for the sibling supplement starting the first day of the month following the change.

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NOTE: If one of the 3 sibling children is adopted, or if one of the children is attending college and not living in the foster parent's home on a daily basis, the sibling incentive is discontinued. Must be 3 or more foster care kids living in the home on a daily basis to be eligible for the supplement.

- The sibling incentive payment will begin the first day of the month following the children's placement in the foster home (e.g. Children move into home on 12/15, the foster home is eligible to begin receiving the sibling supplement on 1/1, but they are not paid this until their January per diem invoice is paid).
 - g. If the children are placed in a foster home and removed from the foster home in the same month, the foster home will not be eligible to receive the sibling supplement.
 - h. If a relative caregiver obtains legal custody of one of the siblings and causes the number of "foster care siblings" to drop below 3, the sibling incentive stops the following month.
9. Minor parent and their child(ren)
- a. If the minor parent and child(ren) remain in the same foster home, and the minor parent retains custody of their child(ren), the foster parent are reimbursed at a minor parent/child inclusive per diem rate for them together.

NOTE: When a minor parent and their child(ren) remain in the same foster home, expenditures for both the minor parent and their child(ren) may be reimbursed.

- b. If the minor parent and child(ren) do not remain in the same foster home, then DFCS will have to obtain custody of the minor child's child(ren) and the foster parents keeping the minor parent and the foster parent keeping the child(ren) would receive separate regular per diem payments.

B. Specialized Foster Care Per Diem - DFCS Foster Homes

1. A state office written waiver is required for the county department to pay a family foster care per diem which is higher than the basic foster care rate plus \$1.75, and must be renewed yearly to evaluate the continuing needs of the child. The DFCS accounting office must receive a copy of the State Office per diem waiver and it must be entered into the SHINES payment of care page, from the Provider Relations Unit, for the appropriate time frame prior to paying the higher per diem.
2. The per diem expenses for a child with a State Approved Waiver, placed in a DFCS foster home, must be charged to UAS codes 574, 575, 577, or 579.

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3. The basic per diem rate would be charged to entitlement code 01. The \$1.75 local waiver would be charged to entitlement code 02 (new March 1, 2004) with the balance of the per diem charged to entitlement code 99.

NOTE: Effective April 2009, any restricted fund cost associated with entitlement codes 01, 02, and 99 should be separated accordingly.

4. If a foster care invoice is received with a higher per diem and accounting does not have a copy of a state approved per diem waiver, it is imperative that accounting immediately contact the appropriate case worker at the County Department. The higher per diem cannot be paid until a state approved waiver is received in accounting and it must be entered into the SHINES payment of care page. It would be appropriate for accounting to pay the maximum basic per diem plus \$1.75 from the child's regular foster care program number (501, 502, or 503) without the state approved waiver.
5. When the waiver is received, the paid per diem invoice(s) would have to be reclassified to the appropriate State Approved Per Diem Waiver Program and the balance due the foster home would be paid.

C. Types of Eligibility

1. **Initial Per Diem** – All children in DFCS family foster care fall into one of the two (2) Initial Per Diem Categories when they first enter placement. The appropriate initial per diem UAS codes are 503 or 579. The maximum length of time that a child can be paid from one of these initial per diem categories is **SIX** months.

NOTE: The first month a child comes into care counts as the first month toward the six month maximum regardless of the number of days the child is actually in care during that month.

2. **IV-E Eligibility** - When it is determined that a child is IV-E eligible, the effective date should be the first day of the month in which all eligibility requirements are met. This usually is back to the original date of placement and would require rerates be completed. The appropriate IVE per diem UAS codes for DFCS family foster care are 501 or 574.

Exception: An **exception** to IV-E eligibility beginning on the first day of the month is when there is a change in status of the child's placement. For example, the foster parents fail to complete the required number of training hours. The child would lose IV-E status the effective day of the change in placement status and would remain ineligible for IV-E funding until the foster home is IV-E recertified.

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3. **IV-B Eligibility** –When a child is determined to be IV-B, the child should be left in the Initial Per Diem category through the sixth month. The change to IV-B should be effective the first day of the seventh month of the child’s placement. A partial month is counted as one month. The appropriate IVB per diem UAS codes for DFCS family foster care are 502 or 577.

For example: if a child entered care 03/05/08 and was determined to be IV-B, then REV MAX would complete the 529 and the foster care eligibility screen in SHINES changing eligibility status from Initial to IV-B effective 09/01/08.

Exception: If a child leaves care (both physical and legal custody is relinquished), then re-enters care and is over 18 the child’s per diem should be expensed to IV-B, not Initial.

D. Maximum Age for IV-E Eligibility

1. To be IV-E eligible, a child must be under the age of 18. The child must be changed to a IV-B per diem category of foster care assistance effective the month after the eighteenth birthday.
2. Accounting staff can run the Children 18 and Over Report from the Child Welfare Reports menu to find children who have turned 18. This report also prints at the end of the COSTAR report. A 529 and foster care eligibility screen in SHINES should be prepared by REV MAX to support the change in the UAS per diem category. The appropriate IV-B per diem codes for children over the age of 18 should be 502 or 577.
3. If you have children on the report who have left care and are 18 years old but you do not want them to continue to appear on the report then you will need to update their child file. In the restricted fund type field, you will have to ask SMI to blank out the letter C (Child) or R (RBWO).

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E. Family Foster Care Payment Requirements

1. A Form 526 (DFCS Foster Care Invoice) which includes the custody county name, child's legal name, foster home name and address, and boarding county name must be completed, signed and dated by the Foster Parent for reimbursement of family foster care per diem and other expenses. Original receipts must be attached for reimbursement of clothing, supplemental supervision, medical costs and other incidentals.

County Directors may elect to have their Foster Care invoices submitted via one of the three options below.

- The Foster Parents will submit all foster care invoices to their DFCS County Office to be signed and dated by a county approving authority before they are provided to Region Accounting for processing.
- The Foster Parents will be allowed to submit their foster care invoices directly to Region Accounting for processing. The county's foster care policy must include a statement that Region Accounting is authorized to process payment for county expenditures within the limits contained in the policy. Any invoice that includes a request outside of the limits of the foster care policy will be forwarded back to the appropriate DFCS office for approval before the payment will be processed.
- The Foster Parents will be allowed to submit their foster care invoices for per diem ONLY directly to Region Accounting for processing. The Foster Parents would be required to complete a separate foster care invoice for clothing, supplemental supervision, medical costs and other expenditures to their DFCS office for approval before the payment will be processed.

NOTE: Reimbursement for per diem must be itemized on a separate Foster Care Invoice for each month.

2. The placement pages, payment of care pages and foster care eligibility determination pages must be entered and approved in SHINES before payments to foster parents can be made. Form 529 (Authorization of Foster Care Change/Termination) is still required for any funding source changes until state office policy is changed.

F. Initial and Annual Clothing

1. Initial clothing is purchased during the first six months following the placement of a child in foster care.

Note: Purchases for initial clothing can be reimbursed up to the first full six months of placement (child comes into care on January 15th, initial clothing

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purchases are allowed from January 15th to July 14th). These expenditures should be charged to the UAS code that per diem is being paid from, but charge to entitlement code “04” Initial Clothing for COSTAR tracking.

2. Limits for initial clothing are set according to age:

Effective 7/1/13

\$206 for children through age 12 and \$309 for children age 13 and over

Effective 7/1/2007

\$200 for children through age 12 and \$300 for children age 13 and over.

3. The County Director may grant a written waiver permitting additional clothing if the child is “hard to fit” or is in “dire need” of an additional wardrobe. **A copy of the waiver must be maintained with the disbursement for audit purposes, and these expenditures are to be paid from entitlement code “99”.**

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- Each child in a family foster home (DFCS or NON-DFCS) also receives an annual clothing allowance of \$300 per state fiscal year (07/01 – 06/30). However, annual clothing cannot be claimed in the same calendar year in which the child enters care. See chart below:

<u>Date Child Comes Into Care</u>	<u>Initial Clothing can be Authorized Beginning</u>	<u>Annual Clothing can be Authorized for FY07</u>
January 2006	January 2006	January 2007 – June 2007
March 2006	March 2006	January 2007 – June 2007
November 2006	November 2006	January 2007 – June 2007

- Children in RBWO (CCI, S/H, and Group Home) placements are not eligible to receive an annual clothing allowance.
- Direct payment for clothing to local stores where “DFCS charge accounts” are set up is not permitted when federal/state funds are being used. If this situation occurs then county funds (if allowed under county policy) would have to cover the cost of the expense. If needed, foster parents and relative caregivers are allowed to request an advance for clothing.
- Foster parents must attach original receipts to the foster care invoice in order to be reimbursed. However, if the original receipts are lost, copies may be submitted marked as “THIS IS A CERTIFIED COPY OF THE ORIGINAL RECEIPT” and a Services Administrator supervisor, Deputy Director or County Director approves the receipts for payment.
NOTE: If a foster home has more than one child which they made purchases for in a given month, then they may write on each original receipt which child’s invoice the originals will be attached to and then make copies of the receipts to be attached to the other children’s invoices.
- SMILE does provide a report to help monitor clothing expenditures – Child Welfare Clothing Report. The report can be found on the Child Welfare page under the Child Welfare Reports option. The report can be run based on any time frame to ensure that you not only capture State Fiscal Year expenditures but you will also capture county expenditures based on their fiscal cycle to ensure over spending does not occur.

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9. Clothing for children in RBWO placements will be reimbursed through the Pre-bill system effective February 2005 (service month).

NOTE: Receipts for several different months of clothing do not have to be submitted on separate Foster Care Invoices, and do not have to have an approval signature on each receipt. However, when you enter them into SHINES or SMILE, you will have to break them out according to the correct service months for reporting purposes.

G. Supplemental Supervision

1. Only children in the custody of DFCS are eligible for supplemental supervision.
2. Effective April 1, 2004, DFCS Foster Parents are no longer required to incur the cost of supplemental supervision and wait for reimbursement. Foster Parents are now referred by the SSCM to the county Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) worker for child care. To be eligible for CAPS the Foster Parent must need **“regular, predictable child care while they work”**.
3. UAS program number 557 is for Foster Care supplemental supervision and this will be invoiced directly to the CAPS program monthly by the CAPS vendor.
4. UAS program number 555, entitlement code 17; will be used to accommodate 4 year olds.
5. There will still be limited usage of supplemental supervision under the foster care programs (501, 502, 503, & 560) when the childcare needs of the foster parent are **“irregular or temporary”**. Per the email dated July 25, 2008 from the Deputy Director of Programs and Policy, the chart below should be consulted when deciding if Supplemental Supervision may be used.

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Circumstances	Resource	Additional Guidelines
Temporary child care is needed while the foster parent or relative works outside of the home	State Supplemental Supervision	If married, both persons must work.
The foster parent or relative care giver does not work and attends training/educational classes to assist them in meeting the needs of the child	State Supplemental Supervision	
Child is placed in a FFH with an approved foster parent in another state.	State Supplemental Supervision	If married, both persons must work.
Respite Care: When the child is placed with another approved foster parent for respite and the child needs child care in a different child care setting while the respite foster parent works.	State Supplemental Supervision	If married, both persons must work.
An approved "occasional" provider is used in the event of the child's illness, school closure or holiday period.	State Supplemental Supervision	If married, both persons must work
The approval of an informal/out of home provider is pending	State Supplemental Supervision	Not to exceed thirty (30) days
The child enters care or has a change in placement	State Supplemental Supervision	Not to exceed five (5) days to allow for the referral to CAPS
The foster parent works and requires regular/predictable child care services	CAPS	If married, both persons must work
Foster Parent Works and Attends required training	CAPS	Already receives child care services through CAPS
Recommendation by the child's doctor or therapist/psychologist	CAPS	??????

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NOTE: If supplemental supervision cannot be paid from state funds due to not meeting CAPS policy, the county may use county funds to reimburse the foster parents and a state office waiver is not required.

6. There may be instances where the Foster Children are denied supplemental supervision because they are ineligible per the CAPS policy. In these cases, if the case manager wants this paid from supplemental supervision they will need to receive a waiver from the Deputy Director of Policy and Programs that reflects this and it must be attached to the Foster Care Invoice before regional accounting can pay the foster home supplemental supervision through the UAS codes 501, 502, 503, or 560, entitlement code 17. (Fiscal Chapter 1016.42, Procedures 1c and 1d)
7. There may be instances where the Childcare Provider chosen by the Foster Parents are denied because they do not meet CAPS requirements. In these cases, the case manager will have to get a state waiver from the Deputy Director of Policy and Programs before they can pay a foster home supplemental supervision through the UAS codes 501, 502, 503 or 560, entitlement code 17. (Fiscal Chapter 1016.42, Procedures 1c and 1d)
8. If the DFCS foster parent or relative caregiver does not meet CAPS eligibility requirements, a waiver is required from the Deputy Director of Policy and Programs and a copy of the waiver must be provided to the accounting office.
9. Workers should negotiate with the regulated child care provider to reduce their rate to the DFCS maximum reimbursement rate. Per memo from Deputy Director of Policy and Programs dated August 14th, 2008, the rate the state will pay can no longer exceed the DFCS maximum reimbursement rate.

NOTE: RBWO (CCI providers) are no longer eligible for supplemental supervision services.

Note: Supplemental Supervision for children in RBWO/CPA placements will be reimbursed through the Pre-bill system effective February 2005 (service month) use (UAS 524).

NOTE: Per email dated 9/21/2009 from the Deputy Director of Program and Policy, requests for retroactive payments will not be allowed if the staff have not followed agency policy in submitting the CAPS applications. Waivers should be submitted only AFTER CAPS has been denied.

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H. Child Restraint Devices

1. The State of Georgia requires all children “under age **eight**” be transported in an approved transportation device (child care seat or booster seat). The foster parent should purchase the car seat and then attach a paid receipt to a foster care invoice to be reimbursed. The car seat then “belongs” to that child and should be taken with the child in the event of a placement move.
2. The County Director/designee has the authority to waive the age requirement and authorize the purchase of a booster seat for a child **8** or older if the child is unusually small for their age or other special circumstances exist.
3. Foster Parents are responsible for purchasing a car seat or booster seat which will be attached to a particular child, the car seat should be purchased from the UAS program code that the child’s per diem is normally charged to. The purchase price of a car seat should not exceed \$125 unless the child has special needs. In cases of special needs children, they will need to obtain a written statement from the attending physician, and attach it and an approved state waiver to exceed the limits established for car seats to their foster care invoice for reimbursement. If the child’s UAS code does not allow for this type of expenditure, reference is normally made in COSTAR to another UAS code to cover these types of expenses.
4. If the agency needs to purchase a car seat or booster seat to transport children on an as needed basis, then the car seat should be purchased from regular operating funds, and is the property of DFCS.

Note: Car Seats for children in RBWO placements will be reimbursed through the Pre-bill system effective February 2005 (service month).

I. Safety Helmets

1. Foster Parents may be reimbursed up to \$30.00 to cover the cost of bicycle safety helmets for children 15 and younger. The foster parent should attach a receipt to their monthly foster care invoice for reimbursement.
2. Consult your COSTAR manual to determine the correct UAS program code to charge this type of expense. First look under the UAS program the child’s per diem is charged. If the child’s per diem UAS code does not allow for this type of expenditure, normally reference is made to another UAS code which should cover these types of expenses.

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Note: Safety Helmets for children in RBWO placements will be reimbursed through the Pre-bill system effective February 2005 (service month).

J. Burial Expenses

1. County Director is allowed to waive the state's maximum participation of \$1,000 by granting a written waiver. However, other financial options need to be explored such as the child's personal funds, family resources, community donations, or insurance policies on the child.
2. Consult the COSTAR manual to determine the correct UAS program code to correctly charge this type of expense. First look under the UAS program the child's per diem is charged to. If the child's UAS code does not allow for this type of expenditure, normally reference is made to another UAS code to cover these types of expenses.

K. Overnight Cost for Emergency Placements of Foster Children

NOTE: Expenditures for cost incurred for the foster child, Case Managers or other Non employee (law enforcement) individuals would be reimbursed from this fund.

1. If a county is unable to place a child in an approved foster care placement, then UAS program 522 (entitlement code 00) funds may be used to cover the cost of meals and the cost of a hotel room for both the child and the SSCM(s).
2. A Form 5357 Bill for Services Rendered should be completed by a Non-Employee to request reimbursement. **RECEIPTS MUST BE ATTACHED FOR REIMBURSEMENT.**
3. Reimbursement to a SSCM must be submitted on the Travel Expense Statement. **RECEIPTS MUST BE ATTACHED FOR REIMBURSEMENT.**
4. A purchase order is required for payment to be made to a hotel.

NOTE: If overnight services for a foster care child are provided by an approved outside vendor, then these expenditures are charged to Program 518. All expenditures including the hotel cost will be paid by the vendor and then submitted to the county department for reimbursement. **RECEIPTS MUST BE ATTACHED FOR REIMBURSEMENT.**

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L. Out-of-State Travel for Foster Child and Case Manager

1. Out-of-State cost for the children's expenditure would be paid using the UAS program code that the child's per diem is normally charged to. If the child's UAS code does not allow for this type of expenditure, normally reference is made to another UAS code which should be used to cover these types of expenses.

NOTE: The Interstate Travel Waiver is prepared and sent to the county department at the time the county is notified that the ICPC placement is approved. It can also be used if the placement in another state disrupts and/or if the child must be returned to Georgia. Travel costs (for the child only) include subsistence, mileage, airfare, etc.

3. A completed Form 5354 (Interstate Travel Waiver) is required before payment will be issued. If the travel is for one employee, approval must be by the County Director. If the travel is for two or more employees, approval must be by the County Director, and their Regional Manager.
3. The cost for the case manager's expenditures to accompany a child or pick up a child that is out-of-state should be paid from the UAS program the employee is normally paid from through Reimbursable Travel type expenditures.
4. In the event the child is in a CPA or CCI type placement, and they require that one of their case managers also accompany the child, this expense should be paid from UAS Code 504.

M. Out of State Foster Care Placements

1. If a Georgia child is placed in another state, ICPC policy states the state is suppose to accept Georgia's per diem rates. However, if the other state refuses to accept our per diem rates and the placement needs to happen for the sake of the child, the county must request a state office written waiver to pay the other state's per diem rate.
2. The county must provide accounting with a copy of the waiver approved by the Deputy Division Director and the payment of care change is entered in SHINES to document the approval of a new per diem rate.

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N. County Funds

NOTE: Please provide your Regional Accounting offices with a new copy of your County Foster Care Guideline Policy so they may ensure that the expenditures are reimbursed properly.

1. In some counties, county funds are used to provide services for children in foster care when the state cannot fund the need or when the child has exhausted their state entitlement. Receipts are still required even though the expenditure is being paid with county funds. Some examples of county related expenditures are listed below:
 - Clothing
 - Haircuts
 - School activities
 - Allowances
 - Foster parent travel expenses – In order for the foster parent to be reimbursed for travel expenditures, they will need to either complete a **DFCS Travel Log** or Form 5357 Bill for Services Rendered Form (including Odometer Readings) and attach it to their foster care invoice. They are eligible for reimbursement at the current State Travel mileage rate, but this is at the discretion of the county.
2. If a child is placed with DFCS foster parents in another county, then the boarding county's county policies are to be adhered to. The custody/legal county has the financial responsibility to pay these expenditures.